

FOOD MATTERS FOOD MATTERS FOOD MATTERS FOOD MATTERS

Eating Oil, Energy and Water



Much of agriculture is dependent on oil, which generates greenhouse gases, the food consumed by an average family of four is responsible for about 8 tonnes of CO₂ a year. Fossil fuels run tractors, make fertilisers, power food production factories, and fuel the planes, ships, trains, and trucks that bring food to shops.



On the farm

Cattle give off methane into the atmosphere (a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide). Compared to pigs and chickens, cattle also need a lot of feed, consuming the most soy-meal feed.



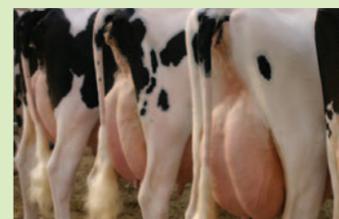
Manufacturing and production

Food processors need energy to run the machines that prepare, clean, and cook food.



Distribution

Food is transported by plane, ship, train and truck. Planes emit more greenhouse gases than any other mode of transport, and are thought to generate 177 times more greenhouse gases than shipping.



The Water we Eat

Animals and plants are made up of between 50% to 90% water, so it's not surprising that farming uses a significant amount of water. Agriculture uses about 70% of the world's fresh water. The meat and dairy industry uses up more water than does growing fruits, vegetables and grains, as cattle need to drink water. Dairy cattle can consume up to 100 litres per day while producing milk!

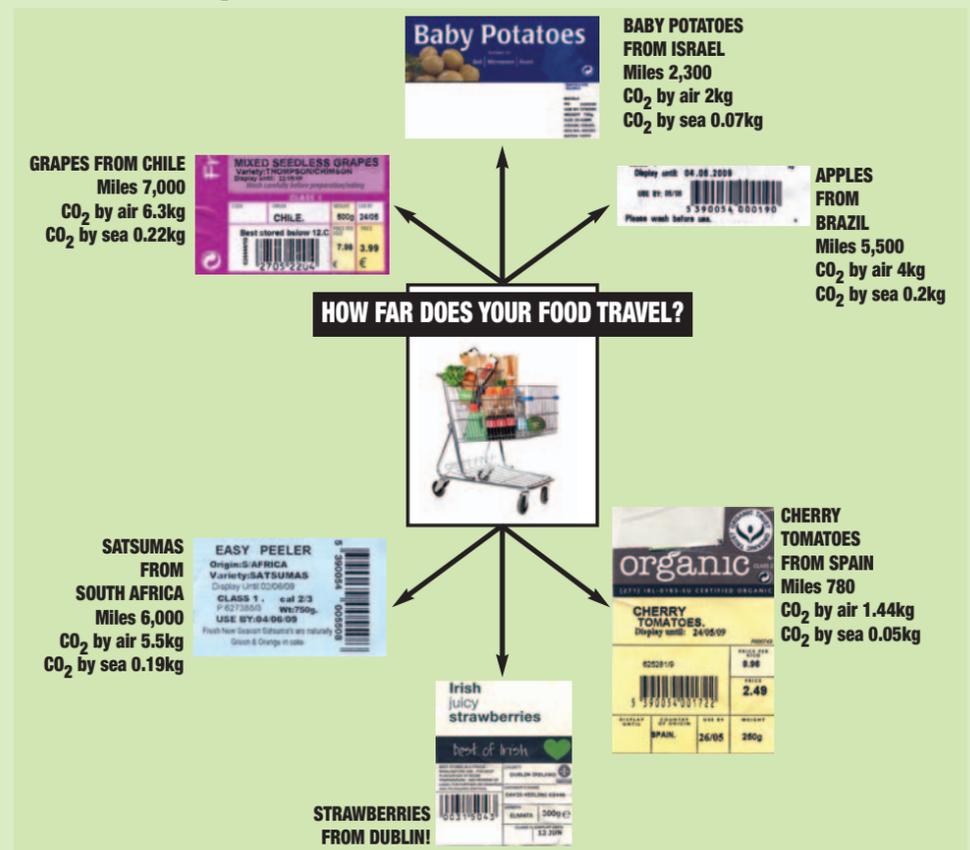
DID YOU KNOW?
About 3,000 litres of water per person per day are needed to produce food.

Food Miles

The distance travelled by food from the farm to your plate is called **Food Miles**. The food in the average family basket has travelled at least 2,000 miles, and even up to 9,000 miles.

DID YOU KNOW?
Green beans imported from Kenya travel 4,900 food miles, apples from the US clock up roughly 3,700 food miles, and beef from Argentina typically travels 6,900 food miles.

Where does my Food come from?



Look closely at labels. The label might say "product of.....", but the beef, pork or chicken used might be from outside the EU. For example, a tikka masala dinner might be prepared in the EU, but made with meat from outside the EU.

Wasting Away

Every year uneaten food ends up in landfill, costing money and meaning bigger landfill sites. Rotting food generates methane, a potent greenhouse gas, adding to your carbon footprint and global warming. The energy that went into producing and transporting food is also wasted. Food packaging creates problems, as much of it is plastic, and not all can be recycled.

DID YOU KNOW?
In Britain alone, £420 is wasted annually on food that is thrown out.

Waste reduction in five steps

Perfect Portions, plan the portion sizes of your meals, and cook enough for you and your guests, and maybe enough to take for your lunch the next day.

Shop Wisely, have an idea of what meals you might cook when shopping, so you don't end up with perishable food that is wasted. Never shop when you are hungry!!!



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Avoid unnecessary packaging and plastics when shopping. Farmers markets are ideal for avoiding excess packaging, as the produce is not usually wrapped in plastics.

Bring **leftovers** to work or school for lunch. Lots of leftovers can also be frozen. Washed plastic containers from takeaway meals are ideal, stick on a little label with the meal and the date made.

Compost what can't be eaten. A composter is like a hungry pig that will 'eat' all your scraps turning them into valuable compost that you can then use for growing your own food.



In The Sea

Fish taken from the oceans increased from 19 million tonnes in 1950 to almost 100 million tonnes in 2000. Globally, fishing today is in crisis, 70% of the world's fish stocks are now either fully exploited, over-fished, depleted, or rebuilding from previous over-fishing. About 27 million tonnes caught by commercial fisheries globally is discarded and wasted as unintentional catch (bycatch).

Some fishing methods are very destructive to the sea floor, dragging species from the ocean floor, turning it into a marine desert.

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What Can You Do?

Eat Seasonal and Local

Eating Seasonally. Eating foods out of season, like strawberries and lettuce in winter, means they are either grown in energy hungry greenhouses, or shipped across the globe, both of which emit greenhouse gases. Foods in season also taste better, and are fresher and more nutritious.



DID YOU KNOW?

Tomatoes grown here in Ireland in heated greenhouses in winter can generate three times more greenhouse gases than tomatoes cultivated in Spain!



Eating Locally. Buying locally produced food will reduce the size of your carbon footprint, and supports the local economy. Farmer's markets can be good places to find local producers, but do ask where the food has come from. Look out for local organic food box suppliers! Try searching online for box schemes in your area or try these www.absolutelyorganic.ie (Dublin) and www.organicrepublic.net (Cork) www.donegalorganic.ie/farm.html (Donegal).

Have at least one meat-free day a week. You don't have to become vegetarian, but reducing your consumption of meat on a weekly basis would be a great way to reduce your carbon footprint. But when you do plan to eat meat, buy Irish beef and lamb, they are mostly grass fed, and use far less feed and water than intensively farmed animals, and travel far less food miles to your plate.



Be Fish smart: Look out for the Marine Stewardship Council logo on fish packaging, for fish sustainably managed. Also look for fish caught using line-fishing methods as these do not have a net to trap dolphins or turtles.

ShopFairtrade: Some foods won't be available from Ireland, we don't grow coffee or bananas! If buying local isn't feasible, look for the Fairtrade label, and try to avoid air-freighted foods.

And Lastly, Grow Your Own!!



Why stop at buying seasonal food, why not grow your own! Growing your own vegetables, herbs and fruit is often easy. It's a great way to shrink your carbon footprint and your grocery bill, and for children to learn how some of their foods gets to their plate.

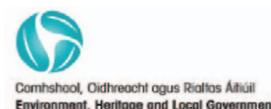
Some top tips for beginners

Start with easy to grow plants. Salad plants such as lettuce, cherry tomatoes, scallions, and radishes tend to be easy to grow. Onions, chives and leeks are also easy to grow. Courgettes are very prolific if it's a warm summer, as are peas and beans if trained up poles.

Try raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries, blackcurrants, all will grow in the Irish climate. Check out www.irishseedsavers.ie for varieties adapted to our climate that will do better, and also rare Irish apples. Plant your own apple tree!

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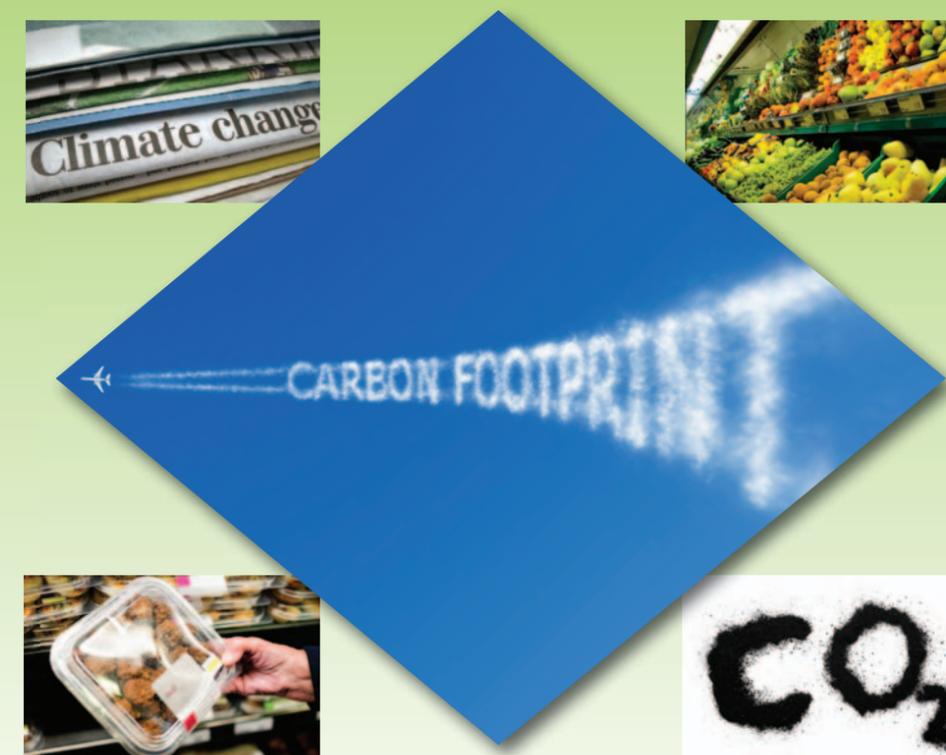
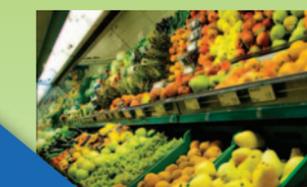
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The Environmental Impact of our Food

Food is vital. But food can travel thousands of miles to reach our plates, and its production, distribution, consumption and disposal play an enormous role in climate change.



From farm to plate, food equates to about 20-30% of our total CO₂ emissions in Ireland.

